

The Night Owl #4

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REINFORCEMENT

Backtrack-Demo 7" Flatspot Records
<http://www.myspace.com/backtrackny>

First thing's first. The artwork on this is sick. It's done by a dude named Spoiler who's in the band Justice from Belgium. He's also done work for Righteous Jams among other bands. The cover is a drawing of wolves on the prowl in the inner city, with "Backtrack" in graffiti font, pretty much everything you could ask in for NYHC style artwork. The wax consists of Backtrack's remastered demo. The band has been talked about a lot since they first came out, being a part of the new resurgence of bands from NYC playing the Outburst/Maximum Penalty sound. They do it well with lots of parts that will make you nod your head as well as good breaks aplenty. One of the things I've noticed about the lyrics is that a lot of them are about either being "stuck on the bottom" or digging your grave". Also they are apparently being both pushed down and kept down by various things. Not anything negative, just kind of weird. This record is good. It's refreshing to hear a demo from a band that's as good as this one. The only drawback is that they haven't released any other material since this came out. Lets hope this band doesn't fizzle and fall to the wayside like Mindpiece NYC did.



From The Chest- Devils and Old Friends Thrash Dad Records
<http://www.myspace.com/fromthechest>

In the Night Owl I like to give a voice to bands that may not get as much exposure as I feel they should. From The Chest is such a band. This was released a few weeks ago and it seems like it has flown under everyone's radar. The closest sound comparison I can come up with for this would be Madball with throatier vocals. The production here is extra crispy, it sounds way better than their demo. The lyrics are very personal, some having to do with issues Ryan the singer had with his father not being around while he was growing up and his family struggling to get by. You don't often hear honest lyrics like these so it's kind of cool to hear it, and it's interesting when paired with this style of music. One complaint with the album is that by the end of it, the vocals and delivery begin to get on your nerves, but this doesn't detract from the good songs on here, they speak for themselves.

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Snack Time:

The Night Owl Burger

Ingredients:

1 joint of cannabis sativa
 2 slices of thin crust pizza (cut in squares)
 1 hamburger cooked to your specifications

First smoke the joint to prepare your mind well enough to thoroughly enjoy this tasty treat while you preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Take the hamburger (which should be cooked as much or as little as you want it, just make sure it's not too dried out by the time it's done) and put it between the two slices of pizza. If the pizza slices overpower the burger in size, then trim them down a little bit so they are proportionate. Take it and put it in the preheated oven for 6 minutes or so, or until the sandwich is piping hot and the cheese is melting around the burger. When finished, take it out of the oven and serve with cold beer and some hot sauce and/or ranch dressing.

Skinhead Hardcore

Not much attention is paid to this subgenre at all. I consider skinhead hardcore to be hardcore bands with an overt Oi influence and that have skinhead imagery in their lyrics or artwork. The first to adapt this style back in the early 80's was a band called Iron Cross from Washington DC. They played on the more punk side of things and were slower and harder than the other bands of the time period, with gruff vocals. After this came the second wave of bands from New York City that centered around CBGB's...bands like The Cro Mags, Agnostic Front, Youth Defense League, Token Entry, and Warzone. These bands came from the streets and sang about the hopelessness and urban blight that surrounded them. This was the heyday of skins in NYC and for the first time large amounts of Black, Latino and Asian skins began to hang out and make their presence known in the scene, breaking the stereotype that only angry, racist white guys could get down. As more and more posers started showing up at CB's with a shaved head and a shitty attitude, more and more senseless violence started to permeate the scene. Fighting for a reason is alright, but skins fighting other skins over some stupid drama, or skins beating up metal heads for no reason is pointless and dumb, and ended up ruining a lot of venues including the shutting down of the hardcore matinees at CBGB's. In the mid to late 90's things got pretty quiet with most bands going back to playing straight up Oi. In the early part of the 2000's, bands like Iron Boots, 86 Mentality, and Riff Raff have carried on the spirit of the old bands from NYC. They've brought back the sound, artwork, and attitude. Here are 3 records that did it:

86 Mentality-Self Titled EP Grave Mistake Records

Intro/Lifetrap has had people trampling each other on the dance floor for a few years now. It is a simple song, but perfect in its simplicity. The singer's voice is about as gruff as it gets...it sounds as if he'd have no problem breaking a steel toed boot off in your ass. They have an aggressive Oi influenced sound, and most of their songs are about going out on the town drunk and getting in trouble. When this record came out a few years back it took the scene by storm, and still has plenty of staying power for today and years to come.

Iron Boots-Weight of the World EP Boredom Kills Records

This is total Warzone worship. No complaints here. They do their thing and put a bit of a twist on things to keep it fresh and interesting. The bass line on the intro of the song "Don't Come Back" is some hard shit. The lead singer has all the Raybeez moves down pat singing these Iron Boots songs with the exact same delivery. Actually the vocals remind me of a cross between Raybeez from Warzone and Macho Man Randy Savage the wrestler. The cover features a gigantic skin lifting the earth over his head. A modern classic .

Riff Raff-Lowlifer Eating Rats Records

This band sounds like a cross between The Abused and Youth Defense League. The lyrics are ultra bleak with most about being a complete outcast to society. My favorite lyrics are:

"Walking by myself down the street
 Hostility on every face that I meet
 Everyone's deceitful, no one to trust
 I feel no emotions just anger and disgust"

The entire record is written in the exact same level of anger and frustration. The artwork features a ghetto scene complete with hookers, car thieves, and some dude taking a shit in the gutter. This is a solid EP, it's weird that nobody ever really mentions it, and it seems like most people have slept on this band in general. Not sure if they've broken up or not, I'm pretty sure they have since there haven't been any new releases since this one. The lowlifer EP is out of print now, so if you come across one in the record bins, pick it up.

Thought Crusade Interview
<http://www.myspace.com/thoughtcrusadepunk>

NO: Ok we got an interview with Thought Crusade...the baddest band on the block. So who plays what?

Ryan L: My name's Ryan Lowry and I play bass

Jake: I'm Jake and I play guitar

Ryan W: I'm Ryan W. and I sing

Kevin: I'm Kevin and I play the buckets

Ben: I'm Ben and I try to play the guitar

NO: What are your influences, where did the sound of the band come from?

Jake: Like Skrew... no not Skrewdriver, well kind of but not really uhuh. Why am I answering this?

Ryan Lowry: Early New York Hardcore mixed with Youth Crew NY Hardcore mixed with Skrewdriver

Ryan W: No not Skrewdriver...a little bit of Have Heart and Bracewar. Actually we just want to sound like Carnivore

NO: So what's up with you guys using punk and skinhead imagery in your lyrics and artwork, not to label you guys or anything but as far as I know there's no punks and skins in the band. Are you trying to pay homage to those scenes or are you just fascinated with it or what?

Ryan L: I would say we use a lot of skinhead stuff cuz like New York Hardcore....all those bands weren't skinheads and they all used that kind of stuff...and we think it's cool and Erik Walsh is our idol.

Jake: We put skinheads in our artwork because we want to see their rippling abs and sweat dripping down their bodies and we just want to suck their dicks...at least I do I don't know about anyone else in the band

Ryan L: Jake told me he likes guys with like really huge upper bodies and really tiny skinny legs with boots, that's why we try to use that as much as possible.

NO: What kind of shit really pisses you off about the scene or hardcore in general

Ryan W: I don't know, everyone wants to be hard and like mosh hard and try and hurt people and try to make it violent, and it's cool to watch, but if you're on the receiving end of one of those retard's blows, it's going to strike a nerve with somebody and someone's going to get hurt pretty bad. Hardcore's pretty awesome, there's a lot of good bands and Chicago rules it so say what you want, it's the truth.

Jake: I think it's dumb that there are a lot of cool bands, but some people only come out when their own bands play a show and they just sit there and text people on their sidekick.

Ryan L: You never see 90 of these people at shows and then a band starts getting hyped then all the old dudes come out. Tonight I saw someone moshing and as soon as they were done they pulled out their sidekick and texted somebody and I kind of wanted to shit on their face.

Ryan W: People need to be more pissed; too many bands are having a good time smiling at each other. Bands should be pissed when they play, and people should be moving around.

NO: You say people should be pissed and I know Ryan said earlier that he hates it when people smash other people and make things violent. When is it too much?

Ryan W: It's to the point now where it's do whatever the fuck you want, make it miserable, make it fun, do whatever, if you get hit in the face I guess that's it big deal. It's basically gotten to the point where if you get hit with a closed fist, you have to take it.

NO: What's your opinion on gangs and crews?

Ryan W: If it's a group of friends hanging out doing it, yea it's cool. When it comes to a point when it's a gangup on innocent kids who just want to have a good time then it's fucking stupid and pathetic. You don't need 4 dudes who are like 250 lbs beating on some 115 pound kid. I'm not going to single out any crews but if it's all friends then it's cool. Here it's cool. Everyone's cool with each other...like FSU...everyone's cool...no one has problems.

Ryan L: I think when it comes to a point when crews are making bands not play certain cities and ganging up on kids who don't know any better, I think it's foolish.

NO: So Jake I hear you dropped the N-Bomb on the radio...what's up with that?

Jake: That actually wasn't me that was my brother

NO: Bullshit!

Jake: Alright if you really want to hear the truth, yea I said the N Word on the radio it was stupid...I don't know sometimes I get kind of crazy and say something stupid. It was pretty dumb I shouldn't have said that. That was probably the dumbest thing I ever said. I'm really not like that.

NO: Tell the Key Story

Jake: One time I took a crap in my hand...well what happened was I lost my key...I lost my car key and I was looking everywhere for it. I told my brother to go find it and he wouldn't, so I found it after awhile and decided to play a joke on my brother so I go upstairs to the bathroom and I took a crap in my hand then I put my key in it. Then I walked up to my brother and said that the last time I saw my key I was eating a chicken sandwich and I had my key in my hand....I ate it so fast I think I might have eaten my key....then I was taking a crap and felt something sharp come out of my butthole and I pulled out the crap with my hand and there was a key in it. He laughed at me.

NO: Favorite Venues in Chicago?

Jake: I used to like the Albion House a lot. I also like People's Projects.

:someone: That's gone

Jake: I'm dropping out of hardcore.

Ryan L: I think Subterranean is the best especially when people mosh in front of security guards and dive off the stage before they can get them. As far as basement places go Ranchos Huevos is cool, but it's too fucking dusty down there. Fort Kakkalak is like The Galaxie but it's free to rent, and a liquor store down the street gave Jake a free shot of Whiskey when he's not 21 while he was wearing short shorts and a bikini top.

Ben: Pretty much any venue is a good venue.

What do you think about Christianity in Punk and Hardcore music?

Ryan W: I think Christianity in hardcore is great because it gives you something good to laugh at. The thing is I've never been in a band where I was able to honestly speak about views like that, because my whole life I was forced to go to church. Losing my faith was a great thing that happened to me, it opened my eyes to a lot of things and for Christianity to exist within a scene which is supposed to be free of everything is pretty fucking stupid. Hardcore and punk....there shouldn't be a lot of boundaries, though there are certain lines you shouldn't cross, like racism and homophobia and shit like that. We live in a day and age where nothing should be canceled out like that. You shouldn't hate on anyone for being gay, unless it's Jake. He deserves to get beat up. Anyways, if you're a Christian, it's cool; just don't bring it to everyone's attention.

NO: What are some of your favorite things about the scene here in Chicago?

Ryan W: Everything's low key here. When new kids come in they're immediately treated with respect. You don't need to feel like you're an outcast anymore. That's what's cool about Chicago. When you go out of town and you don't know anybody and start moshing at a show, you'll get weird looks from people. Here nobody cares, do whatever the fuck you want. Out here, and everywhere else I've been (east/west coast) it's always been the same group of kids doing the same things supporting shit for the past 8 years. Here, whatever your beliefs may be whether you're straight edge or you broke edge, or you're a vegan, or you like to party....everyone is accepted the same here.

NO: Kevin, I understand you're pledging a frat up at NIU, what's your opinion on that coexisting with you're interest in hardcore, and what are your views on frats in general?

Kevin: I guess it goes back to what Ryan said about doing what you want, but I've met a lot of cool guys in this frat that actually came from hardcore scenes. It's a bunch of cool dudes who like to have fun, hang out, lift weights, fuck girls etc. which is pretty much what my life consists of right now....lifting weights, having sex, playing football, and playing drums for a hardcore band. No matter what you say about it, that's what I want to do and I'm going to do it.

Thought Crusade's "Common Man" EP is still available from www.organizedcrimerecords.com It's one of my favorite records of '08. Get it.

That's it for this issue. If you have any questions/comments or if you want something reviewed get in touch.

-Charlie (KingCobra8291@yahoo.com)